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ABSTRACT

Since the great need in elementary education is to help children understand the social world in which they live, the great need in the education of elementary teachers is to help them link social science themes with children's experiences. The objectives of the new social science teacher education program are to develop the ability of prospective teachers to: 1) analyze social problems; 2) handle the analytical tools of the social sciences; 3) relate the analytical tools to history, and to geography; 4) apply these tools with increasing depth throughout the elementary grades; and, 5) keep up with new ideas in the social sciences and translate them into the curriculum. The comprehensive one-year program requires the cooperation of the faculties of education and the social sciences --economics, political, sociology, anthropology, history, and geography. The year is broken down into alternating periods: three weeks of presentation on the structure of knowledge of each discipline; followed by a five week laboratory where the structure is applied to real life situations, problem situations, and to classroom situations from kindergarten to sixth grade. This interdisciplinary program will end with a dissemination conference. (SBE)

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NEWSLETTER

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A PROPOSAL FOR THE EDUCATION OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

LAWRENCE SENESH

This issue is devoted to the education of teachers in the social studies. Much has been said about the need for better teacher education, as reflected in Rosemary Barker's article, "A Viewpoint on Teacher Education," in this Newsletter. *It seems likely that the need will not be met by minor revisions in existing programs; radically different programs will probably be required. Such a program is presented in this article by Professor Lawrence Senesh. Major innovative elements of the program include integration among the social sciences, close cooperation between academicians and educators, and bloc programming. Senesh is Professor of Economic Education at Purdue University and a member of the SSEC's Board of Directors.*

The widening gap between the need for social understanding in our dynamic world and the actuality of what takes place in the elementary classroom is one of the greatest problems we face today. The most important element in closing this gap is a big improvement in the education of elementary teachers.

Natural scientists and social scientists have become aware of this ever-increasing gap in the last fifteen years, as they have visited elementary classrooms and observed the unused potentialities of the children and the helplessness of teachers to capitalize on that potential. In response to what they saw, they developed new and exciting materials which related the cutting edge of knowledge to the children's daily experiences. These new materials, together with the elementary school teacher's receptiveness to new ideas and the children's enthusiasm, are creating a new intellectual climate in the elementary schools. The children who are being exposed to the new sciences, new mathematics, and new social sciences represent an entirely different product from those who left the elementary schools just a few years ago.

The Need

The new programs have not, however, lived up to expectations. This shortcoming is not due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of the children or the teachers, nor to the failure of the materials. Mostly, it has been due to the inadequate training of the elementary teacher who uses the materials. Good materials are essential to good teaching, but there is no such thing as "teacher-proof" materials which can be successful without regard for the ability and training of the teachers who teach them.

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Children know about social realities, directly and through television. They are aware of discrimination, neighborhood riots, unemployment, the war in Viet Nam, air and water pollution, and congestion and blight in the cities. Once these events become a part of the child's experience, it is the obligation of the elementary classroom teacher to help him understand them. Finding a design which underlies this seemingly chaotic world and showing man as a problem-solving being are the main purposes of education.

Since the great need in elementary education is to help children understand the social world in which they live, the great need in the education of elementary teachers is to help them link social science themes with the children's experiences. Unfortunately, teacher-training institutions do not equip elementary school teachers with the analytical tools they need, such as employment and price theory, the theory of social stratification, the concept of culture, the theory of cultural change, and the theory of conflict resolution. Such tools are important in understanding everyday life.

The present programs of teacher-training institutions for elementary teachers do not give teachers the qualifications they need to teach the new social science curricula. It is usual, for example, for elementary teachers to graduate from most colleges and universities without taking course work in each of the social sciences which form the basis of the new curricula. Even where the teachers do take one or two courses in each of the social sciences, they take general introductory courses which are only remotely related to the classroom needs of prospective teachers. Academic departments of most colleges and universities give little priority to the education of teachers, and social studies methods courses typically are unsuccessful in translating social science theories into methods and materials applicable to the elementary school classroom.

Many summer courses for experienced teachers are intended to bring them up to date on new professional developments. But these courses have the same flaws as do the undergraduate courses taken by prospective teachers; they do not prepare teachers to implement the new social studies.

In the hope of offsetting these deficiencies in undergraduate and postgraduate education of teachers, the federal government and private foundations have financed many new programs in colleges and universities. Most of these have been inservice institutes and workshops, which have not differed greatly from the other offerings of the colleges and universities and have had little success. The institute and workshop staff members have not developed techniques to convey effectively the social science theories and to show teachers how to integrate these theories into the curriculum.

Any hoped-for revolution in social science education can have only limited success so long as teachers are not adequately trained to do their share in narrowing the gap between social theory and classroom needs. The achievement of adequate preparation for elementary teachers will require designs that are radically different from those that now prevail.

Objectives of the Program

What should be the characteristics of this new teacher-training program? The objectives of the new social science teacher-education program should be to develop the ability of prospective teachers to (1) analyze social problems, (2) handle the analytical tools of the social sciences, (3) relate the analytical tools to history, (4) relate the analytical tools to geography, (5) apply the analytical tools with increasing depth throughout the elementary grades, and (6) keep up with new ideas in the social sciences. These six objectives are described in the following paragraphs.

(1) Teachers should be able to take social problems which concern children and show them how to analyze the scope and causes of such problems. Teachers should be able to show children the contribution of individuals, of private groups, and of the government in solving such problems.

(2) The elementary school teacher should become acquainted with the analytical tools of the social sciences. Since there is no unified theory of social sciences, the social studies as such cannot offer analytical tools necessary to understand the social processes. For this reason, future teachers should be exposed to the analytical tools of the main social science disciplines: economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology.

Each of these disciplines is made up of a logical structure of ideas. These ideas should be taught to future elementary school teachers instead of the vast amount of unrelated materials to which students are currently exposed in uninspiring introductory courses. These structures of the disciplines have been developed by a team of social scientists under the sponsorship of the Social Science Education Consortium. Each of these structures have the following characteristics.

They represent the fundamental ideas of the discipline and do not relate to any specific grade level.

The ideas within the structure are logically related to each other.

Each structure can be used with increasing depth and complexity from grade to grade.

The ideas within the structure can be related to the children's experience in every grade.

(3) As a result of the program, the teacher should be able to explain the economic reasons behind the gold rush, the economic aspects of slavery, the economic reasons which underlie the farmer's demand for cheap money, and the economic and political problems which the founders of our new nation faced in building an economic and political system.

(4) The teacher should be able to use the analytical tools of social sciences in connection with geography. For example, teachers should be able to understand and explain how geographic factors help to determine the division of labor and the location of cities. They should be able to explain how the availability of renewable and non-renewable resources determines the rate of economic growth of a region, and how the uneven distribution of resources determines the patterns of trade.

(5) The program should help teachers translate social concepts to the elementary student with increasing depth and complexity from grade one to grade six. For example, teachers should be able to see the progression in the teaching of price theory. In the first grade, the teacher should see the students as potential college students, and the college teachers should see in the college students the first graders. The success of teaching concepts progressively depends on the teacher's ability to see the students as persons in a motion picture instead of a snapshot.

(6) All teachers leaving teacher-training institutions should have developed an intellectual curiosity for new ideas. They should be eager to translate into the curriculum the new ideas which are relevant for the child.

The Program

The objectives described above can be achieved in a comprehensive one-year social science education program. The program should be planned as a bloc for a particular group of students, who would receive 15 to 20 hours of credit for the year's work. A time schedule of the plan is shown in Figure 1.

Such a program would require the cooperation of the faculty of education and the faculty of the six social science areas of economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, and geography. The year would be broken down into alternating periods of three weeks and five weeks. During the three-week periods, the structures of knowledge of economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology would be presented. Each three-week period would be followed by a five-week laboratory. In these laboratories, the future teachers would gain experience in application of these structures in different teaching situations.

Economics as an Example

The economics phase of the program is presented here in detail. The other three phases—political science, sociology, and anthropology—would follow a similar pattern and are presented here only in abbreviated form.

The academic year begins with the presentation of the fundamental ideas of economic knowledge. The economist presents the following concepts and relationships:

(1) Every society faces the conflict between unlimited wants and limited resources.

(2) To narrow the gap, societies specialize geographically, occupationally, and technologically.

(3) Due to specialization, societies are interdependent.

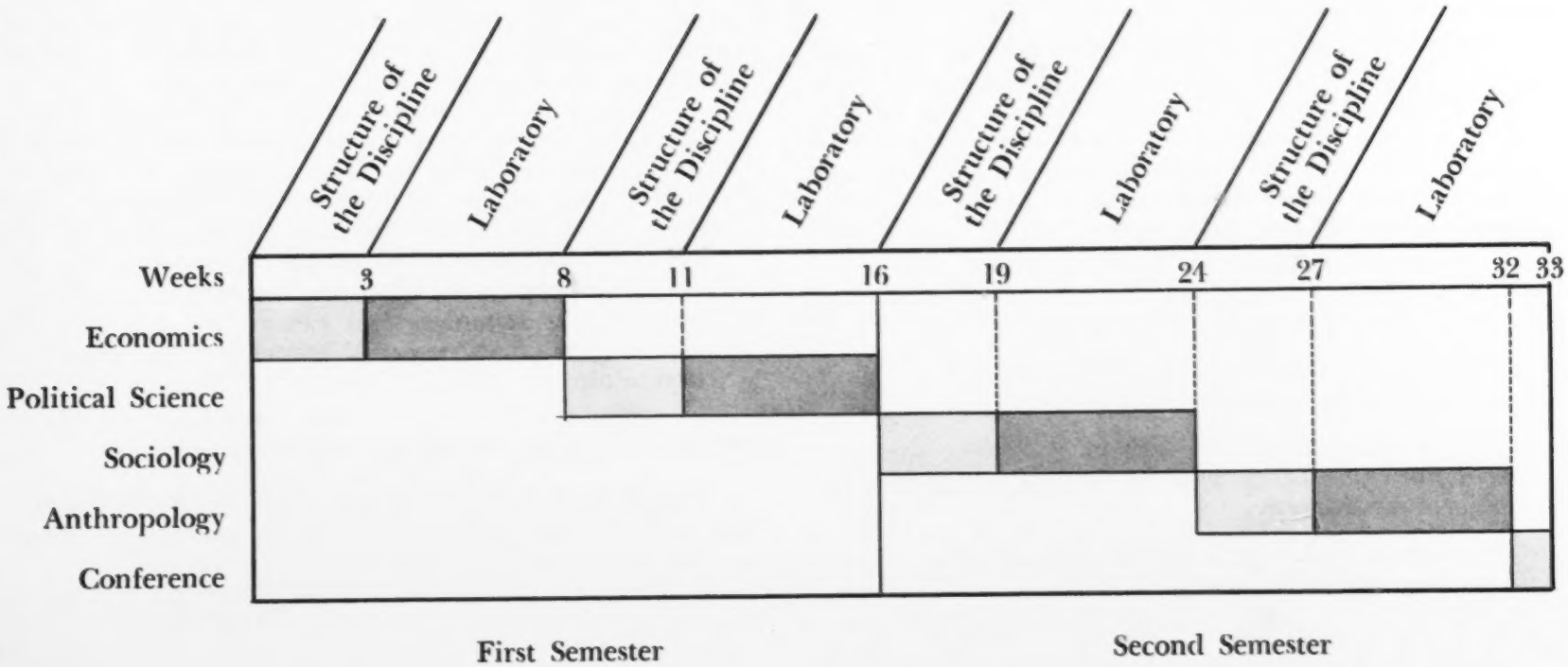
(4) Countries develop a transportation system and a monetary system to facilitate the interdependence.

(5) Due to limitations of resources and technology, the gap between unlimited wants and limited resources can never be closed entirely. Economic systems organize mechanisms to allocate scarce resources. In our system, the market distributes scarce resources.

(6) The market determines what to produce, how much to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce the goods and services. Through the

Figure 1

Schedule of Proposed Program



group behavior of consumers, business, and government, the market also determines the level of income and of employment.

(7) Public policy modifies market decisions to promote general welfare, which may be identified as economic growth, stability, security, freedom, and justice.

The economist presents these ideas during the first three weeks of the academic year. After this period, the class reorganizes itself into a laboratory. In the laboratory the students practice translating the structures into classroom situations. Participants assume the roles of teachers and students. Video tapes may be taken for later evaluation and for observation of progress. The structures taught may be applied to real life situations, problem situations, to classroom situations from kindergarten to sixth grade, in historical context, and in geographical context.

(1) *Real Life Situations*

Some people earn low incomes, others earn high incomes. Using wage theory, the student teachers explain reasons for these differences in incomes.

A local factory has closed down. Using price theory, a student teacher explains to the other laboratory members why the factory had to close.

Local steel mills have closed down, and so have many other businesses. A student teacher explains, using employment theory, the reasons for the drop in the level of employment.

The laboratory considers the situation of families who are on welfare. The student teacher should be able to explain the philosophy which underlies welfare programs.

Children participate in the school lunch program. Student teachers explain why society decided to improve the diet of children through government programs.

An army of poor people march to Washington. Student teachers explain the reasons for poverty.

The United States Congress decides to aid Appalachia. A student teacher, with the aid of growth theory, explains why the Appalachian region has been left behind other regions of the country.

(2) *Problem Situations*

The program instructor translates some of these life situations into problem situations. Students acting as teachers show how these problems can be studied through application of the scientific method. For example, the teacher can present to a class (pretending to be a fourth-grade group) the problem of Appalachia. The teacher presents first the symptoms of the problem: deserted coal mines, cut-off lumbering areas, sleepy market towns, abandoned farms, burning coal mines, and creeks polluted by the coal mines.

The teacher presents the various aspects of the problem: Why should our society be concerned with the problem of Appalachia?

Because unemployment and underemployment represent a waste of resources for the country.

Because the sharp contrast between the low standards of living of Appalachia and the higher standards of living in other parts of the country may create ill feeling and alienation of the people in Appalachia.

Because adjustment to poverty within families can perpetuate poverty from one generation to another.

Because society must in fairness help the depressed areas, since the rest of society has benefited from the coal and lumber taken from the Appalachian region.

After the aspects of the problem have been taught, the student teacher defines the problem in terms of a

conflict between people's desires and existing institutional arrangements: How can the economy of Appalachia develop in such a way that it will increase job opportunities for those who are unemployed and provide increased incomes for those whose earnings are below the poverty level?

Next, the student teacher shows how the problem can be measured. He presents and critically evaluates such statistical data as the gap between existing job opportunities and members of the labor force. Student teachers should be able to present and evaluate income distribution statistics and statistics on health and housing conditions in presenting the scope of the problem.

After the scope of the problem has been presented, the student teacher uses the analytical tools and explains the causes of the problem:

The economic nature of primary industries and their limitations on economic growth.

The cyclical nature of primary industries and the economic instability which they cause in the Appalachian economy.

The relationship between geographic isolation and transportation.

The relationship between isolation and the culture of Appalachian families, showing that the resultant culture hinders economic initiative and growth.

The relationship between geographic isolation and the growth of cities.

The student teacher should be able to explain how local, state, and federal governments are planning together to generate economic growth in Appalachia through the stimulation of growth centers and through the development of transportation systems, educational systems, and health systems.

Student teachers in this laboratory should be able to take any social problem relevant to our country and organize it according to the steps of the problem-solving approach. They should be able to use relevant pictorial materials and other materials for their own use and for the use of the children. Primary school teachers should be able to relate problems to the neighborhood and to the city, always reminding the children that society is as good as man's willingness to study and solve its problems.

(3) *Classroom Situations, Grades One to Six*

The laboratory allows practice in how the various ideas in the structure of economics can be taught with increasing depth as the child moves from grade to grade. In the first grade, the future teacher should be able to teach the concept of price and help children discover how prices change with changes in supply and demand.

The student teacher should be able to teach in the second grade the different types of competition, such as competition among farmers, among big manufacturers, and among retail stores.

In the third grade, student teachers should be able to teach how the businessman tries to maximize profit on the margin.

In the fourth grade, student teachers should be able to teach children the nature of the market system.

In the fifth grade, the student teacher should be able to teach how the market system has developed in our country since the colonial period. This lesson builds a bridge between economics and history.

The student teacher should also be able to use the analytical tools of the social sciences in geographic situations, showing how the location of economic activities is related to the uneven distribution of human and non-human resources over the earth.

Finally, the student teacher will have access to lucidly written articles which present frontier ideas of economists. It should be the task of the laboratory to analyze such articles and screen the content for classroom application. In this way, student teachers will get experience in reading articles of an economic nature and applying the ideas to classroom situations. In this way, the school system can reduce the time lag between the advancement of knowledge and the school curriculum.

Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology

As indicated in Figure 1, each of the other disciplines—political science, sociology, and anthropology—is treated in the same manner as economics.

For example, the political scientist shows how some of the wants of the public become political demands; how political demands are sifted through the gatekeepers; and how some of them become binding decisions. He also shows how the binding decisions affect the various institutions of the social system, and how these impacts upon the social system generate positive or negative responses toward the authority, the regime, and the political society.

After the presentation of the political system, the student teachers apply this structure of ideas to real life situations; for example, to local political issues such as water fluoridation, planning and financing urban renewal projects, and building new express highways through the cities. Some of these life situations can be translated into political problems and may be presented to the laboratory participants through the problem-solving technique. For example, the student teacher might show how to study the transportation problem of our cities.

When the laboratory participants begin to discuss the various steps in solving the transportation problem, they should be able to feel and describe the political tension which may arise between the different factions of the city. Some of the city people may demand that more express highways be built by tearing down neighborhoods; others may demand more and cheaper mass transportation to save our cities from dislocation caused by such tearing down of neighborhoods.

The laboratory is also used to demonstrate how political understanding can be expanded in depth as the children move from grade to grade. The basic ideas of political science can be applied to the political structure of the family in the first grade, to city government in the second grade, to land use planning in the third grade, to state government and the role of the federal government in assisting regional development in the fourth grade, and to the formation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in the fifth grade. Both historical and geographical applications can be made at most grade levels; a historical perspective would be useful in studying all of the applications suggested for grades two to five, and the basic ideas of geography would be particularly useful in studying both cities and regions.

In the third sequence, the fundamental ideas of sociology are presented. The sociology instructor shows the class how the values and norms of society shape social institutions in which individuals occupy positions and roles. He points out how sociologists study the interactions between the expectations of the institutions toward the individuals, and the individual's expectations with respect to institutions. These interactions will affect the individual's attitudes toward society's values or norms, resulting in support or modification of the values or norms of society.

Next the student teachers learn how these ideas can be related to real life situations of the children. For example, children need to know about the many expectations which society has toward them—such as the expectations of friends, parents, and teachers which may conflict and must somehow be reconciled.

In problem-solving situations, the student teacher may show how certain segments of society, such as the poor people of the inner city or the Negroes or the American Indians, may become alienated from society as a whole. The student teacher may show that this is what may happen in a society where members of different groups have been raised within different systems of values.

In connection with history, the student teacher learns how value preferences change our institutions. In a fifth or sixth grade class, he could then show how the value preferences of agrarianism, paternalism, leisure, and white supremacy affected the development of the social institutions of the Old South. How did such value systems hinder economic development of this region?

In the final sequence, the laboratory class studies the fundamental ideas of anthropology. The anthropology instructor shows how man has satisfied his needs within the social structure, how the satisfaction of these needs has been improved through inventions and innovations, how these inventions and innovations challenged tradition, and how some of these inventions and innovations have been accepted by society, leading to the evolution of culture.

In the laboratory on anthropology, as with political science and sociology, the student teachers relate the concepts of anthropology to life situations, to problem situations, to different grade situations, to historical situations, and to geographic situations.

By the time the class gets to the study of anthropology, the laboratory has become increasingly oriented to a multi-disciplinary approach. The social problems studied during this period can be treated not only as economic problems but also as political problems, sociological problems, and anthropological problems. Social problems, almost without exception, have all these aspects, and the competence of the teacher must be adequate for discovering and handling the many facets of the problems. As has been pointed out in discussing the economics laboratory, the problem of Appalachia cannot be understood without understanding how economic forces, political forces, the forces of value preferences and culture, and historical and geographic forces, all helped to shape the people and the way they live in this area.

Conclusion

The program ends with a culminating activity. This culminating activity may be a curriculum conference, where the most creative student teachers are given the opportunity to present their ideas to the members of the classroom and to the invited audiences from the neighboring school systems and from educational institutions interested in observing potential master teachers in action.

To reward a combination of academic excellence and educational excellence will help not only to develop a new type of elementary school teacher but also a new type of teacher-training institution in which the academician and the educator will discover that they have to work together in a grand alliance if they want our educational system not only to survive but to meet the needs of an increasingly complex society.